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ABSTRACT

A study of Connecticut's Middlesex Community College (MxCC) graduates of 1985 was conducted to provide information for use in academic advising, program and curriculum planning, and identifying needs for further research. The study revealed the following information about the 281 members of the graduating class: (1) of the 284 degrees awarded, 79 were "General Degrees," 53 were in Business Administration, 20 were in Marketing, and 19 were in Information Systems; (2) 198 of the degrees were awarded to women and 86 to men; (3) 12.8% of the graduates had attended full-time only, 33.5% had attended part-time only, and 53.7% had attended both full- and part-time; (4) 37.4% had interrupted their studies for one or more semesters while pursuing their degree; (5) the average number of semesters needed to complete a degree was 7.07; (5) there appeared to be some correlation between those programs whose graduates took longer than 7.07 semesters to complete and those with older students; (6) the average grade point average was 3.021 for graduates and 2.5 for the student body as a whole; (7) 53% of the graduates had W grades on their transcripts and had withdrawn from an average of 2.7 classes; (8) 45.2% used transfer credit to graduate; and (9) relatively small percentages of the graduates took remedial English classes. (AYC)

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EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MACC CLASS OF '85 (AND MORE)

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INTRODUCTION

For the past several years, while reviewing graduation checklists, it became apparent to us that very few MxCC graduates have a "typical" college experience. That is to say, few spend two years full time and leave at age 20 with an associate's degree. We also would note that some people spent more than ten years working on a degree; others had a variety of college experiences; that a wide range of ages and talents was represented. This study grew from our curiosity about who our graduates are. There are other purposes that we hope to serve through this study of the graduates of 1985.

1. The more we know about those who graduate, the more effective we can be in our academic advising.
2. It is also useful to be able to analyze graduation patterns for purposes of program and curriculum planning.
3. It is hoped that the data will assist in future decision making while serving as a springboard for further studies.

DISCUSSION OF DATA

Table I provides an interesting breakdown of graduates by program. The average age of graduates is 29.5, and 70.8% are women. Both these figures parallel our entire student body.

Table I also shows that the General Degree is clearly the most popular at MxCC, followed by Business Administration, and then down significantly to Marketing, Information Systems and Executive Secretarial. Three programs, Liberal Arts/Science, Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Counselor, and Environmental Science, had only one graduate each, and Medical Secretarial with three and Commercial Art with four were also low. There were no graduates in Liberal Arts/Humanities.

The college needs to consider the implications of these numbers. Why do the largest number of graduates choose the General Curriculum? Is it easy? the most flexible? the most useful for transfer purposes? the easiest program into which transfer credits may be fit? General Degree graduates tend to be slightly older than the average graduate, as are those who use transfer credit (Table V). What can the college do to make those programs which are already attractive to large numbers of students even more attractive?

At the other end of the spectrum are those programs with no or few graduates. Is this an indication that these programs should be eliminated? or that the programs need significant changes to become more attractive to students? Why are they not attractive? Should these programs be maintained to preserve academic variety? Are there more efficient ways to allocate the institution's resources?

One program, Law Enforcement, graduated only males in 1985, while the four secretarial programs graduated only women. CATV could be identified as a predominantly male program, while Radiology and Human Services graduates in 1985 were predominantly female.

Considering only degree programs, and those with more than one graduate, provides the following information concerning age of graduates. The five programs with the youngest average age graduates, in ascending order, are Legal Secretarial, CATV, Executive Secretarial, Medical Secretary and Assistant and Marketing. The five programs with the oldest graduates in descending order are Law Enforcement, General, Information Systems, Business Administration, and Human Services. Interestingly, there is overlap between the oldest and largest number of graduates lists, and between the youngest and fewest graduates lists. Is it possible that younger students are not coming to MxCC, so that programs attractive to younger students are smaller? Or does this suggest that younger students do not successfully complete programs, for whatever reason?

TABLE I

NUMBERS BY PROGRAM, SEX AND AGE OF GRADUATES

Program	Number of Graduates	Avg. Age of Graduates	Number of Women	Avg. Age of Women	Number of Men	Avg. Age of Men
Liberal Arts/Science	1	32.0	1	32.0	0	0
Accounting	12	28.2	9	28.8	3	26.3
Business Administration	53	31.0	37	32.0	16	28.8
CATV	7	21.6	1	21.0	6	21.7
Drug and Alcohol	1	59.0	1	59.0	0	0
Environmental Science	1	20.0	1	20.0	0	0
Executive Secretarial	18	22.4	18	22.4	0	0
General	79	32.9	53	33.7	26	31.4
General: Business Option	11	28.1	10	28.8	1	21.0
General: Commercial Art	4	27.0	2	28.0	2	26.0
General: Law Enforcement	9	36.3	0	0	9	36.3
Human Services	16	29.1	14	29.9	2	24.0
Information Systems	19	32.6	14	34.0	5	28.6
Legal Secretarial	8	20.3	8	20.3	0	0
Marketing	20	25.6	7	21.0	13	28.0
Medical Secretarial	3	26.7	3	26.7	0	0
Medical Secretarial & Asst.	5	23.8	5	23.8	0	0
Radiology	15	28.6	13	28.2	2	31.0
CATV Certificate	2	29.5	1	31.0	1	28.0
TOTAL	284*	29.5	198*	29.2	86*	30.2

*Numbers reflect double degrees.

Table II provides some very interesting information about the 1985 graduates. Only 12.8% of the graduates were full-time students for their whole time at MxCC. Just about one-third, 33.5%, attended college part-time, and over half, 53.7%, combined part-time and full-time semesters to get the degree. Reinforcing the concept that "stopping-out" does not represent failure, 37.4% of the 1985 graduates interrupted their attendance for one or more semesters while pursuing the degree.

TABLE II

STUDENT STATUS OF GRADUATES

	N = 281 Number	Percent
Full-time only	36	12.8%
Part-time only	94	33.5%
Full and part-time	151	53.7%
Students who interrupted attendance	105	37.4%

Table III tends to underscore the data showing that the majority of graduates were a combination of full-time and part-time by indicating that the average number of semesters needed to complete a degree was 7.07. This is an important concept for students to understand. The typical student beginning in the fall, 1986 will not graduate in the spring, 1988. Knowing this may take off the pressure that some students feel. A significant number of students come to the Academic Dean's Office each January asking to take 18 or more credits so "I can graduate." Perhaps the advisors recommending these overloads would better serve the students by lightening their load and allowing them to learn more in fewer classes and graduate later.

TABLE III

AVERAGE NUMBER OF SEMESTERS ATTENDED BY PROGRAM

Program	Average Number of Semesters Attended	Standard Deviation
Liberal Arts and Science	5	0
Accounting	7	3.72
Business Administration	8.36	2.98
CATV	6.71	2.25
Drug and Alcohol	13	0
Environmental Science	4	0
Executive Secretarial	5.78	2.86
General	7.33	5.46
General: Business Option	8.09	4.44
General: Commercial Art	5.25	.83
General: Law Enforcement	4	2.67
Human Services	6.94	2.77
Information Systems	8.79	2.09
Legal Secretarial	4.75	.97
Marketing	6.75	2.09
Medical Secretarial	5.67	.47
Medical Secretarial & Assistant	5.2	1.47
Radiologic Technology	6.33	2.44
CATV Certificate	9	3
OVERALL	7.07	

Figure 1 shows graphically the year in which various numbers of 1985 graduates began studies. By observation, there appears to be some correlation between those programs whose graduates take longer than 7.07 semesters to graduate and those with older students. Similarly, for those programs whose graduates finish in less than 7.07 semesters, there seems to be correlation with the programs with younger average ages.

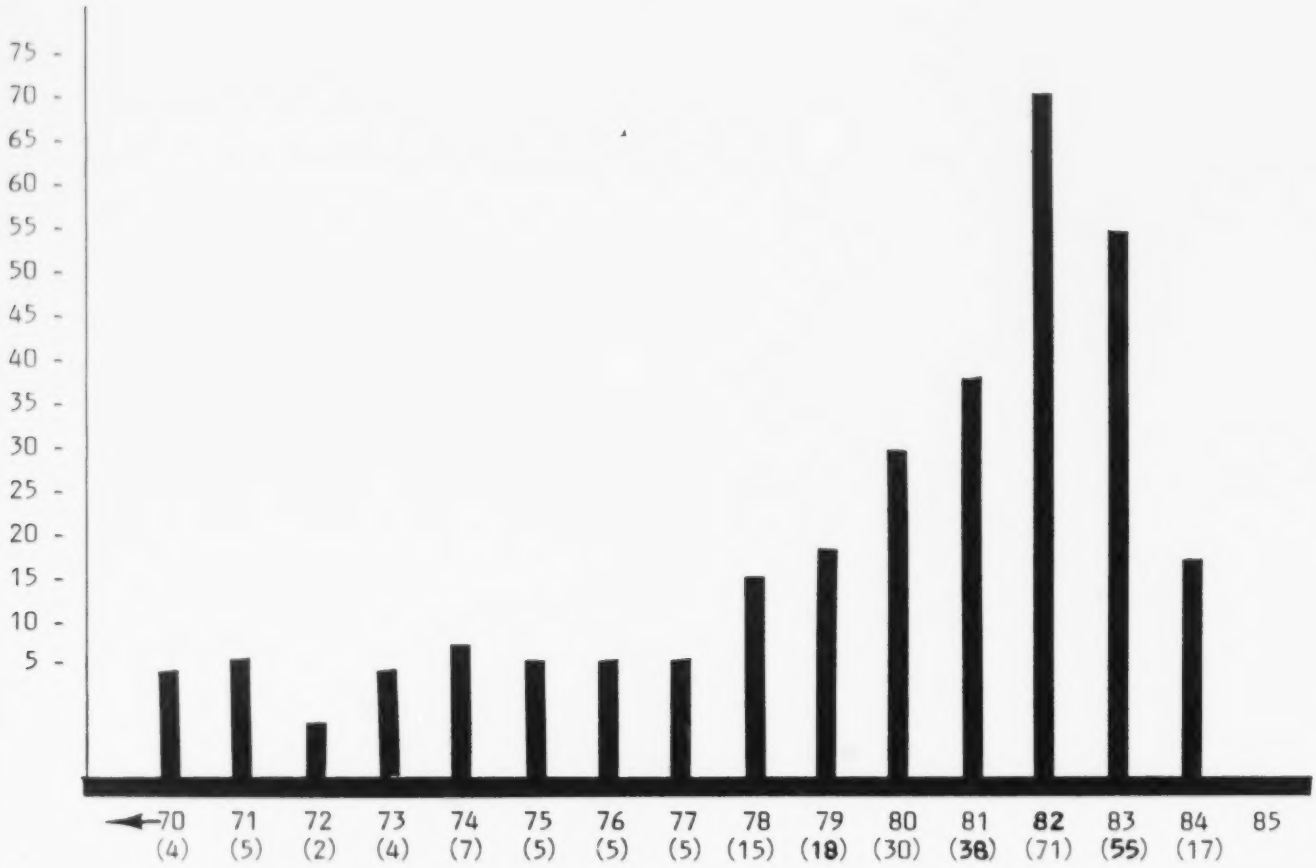

FIGURE I. This chart shows graphically the number of students who began studies in the year preceding 1985.

Table IV examines the grades of 1985 graduates. The average Q.P.A. is 3.021 for graduates, which can be compared to some recent figures for the entire student body, which tends to average around a Q.P.A. of 2.5. Not surprisingly, the adult female graduates (defined as 25 and older) were the highest ranking group. Under 25 males were the lowest ranking graduates.

It is interesting to note that over half the graduates, 53.0%, have W grades on their transcript, and that, of those, they had withdrawn from an average of 2.7 courses. A much smaller percentage, 6.4%, graduated with I grades.

Also interesting is the observation that, for the class of 1985, their Q.P.A. after 12 credits was a good predictor of their final Q.P.A. Correlation can range from -1.0 to +1.0. The r of .875 indicates a fairly positive correlation between Q.P.A. after 12 credits and final Q.P.A.

TABLE IV
GRADES OF GRADUATES

N = 281

Average Q.P.A.	3.021
Median Q.P.A.	3.064
Variance	.321
Standard Deviation	.566
Range	2.001-4.000 (1.999)

	Q.P.A. All Students	Q.P.A. Males	Q.P.A. Females
Under age 25	2.694	2.657	2.704
Age 25 and up	3.268	3.064	3.365

Number of Graduates With W Grades (%)	Of Those Avg. Number of Courses With W Grades	Number of Graduates with I Grades (%)	Of Those Avg. Number of Courses With I Grades
149 (53.0%)	2.7	18 (6.4%)	1.2

Average Q.P.A. After 12 Credits	% Change to Final Q.P.A.	Correlation Q.P.A. After 12 Credits: Final Q.P.A.
2.969	1.75%	r = .875

Table V shows that a significant number, 45.2%, of 1985 graduates used transfer credit to graduate. The average number of credits transferred in by this group was 31.0, and, this group tended to be older than the average graduate. Considering that nearly half of the graduates used transfer credit, it may be reassuring to some to note that the average number of MxCC credits used by graduates was 51.4.

TABLE V

USE OF TRANSFER CREDIT BY GRADUATES

Number of graduates using transfer credit	127	(45.2%)
Average number of transfer credits used by graduates (of those who used transfer credit)	31.0	
Average age of those using transfer credit	34.5	
Average number of MxCC credits used by graduates (all graduates)	51.4	

Table VI raises some interesting questions about what happens to students who take remedial courses in terms of whether they eventually graduate. Relatively small percentages of the 1985 graduates took English 98 and English 99 (10.3% and 9.6%, respectively). A somewhat higher percentage of graduates (34.2%) took Mathematics 99. Does this imply that students who take English 98 or 99 are less likely to graduate?

The ages of graduates who took English 98 and 99 are well below the average at 22.8 and 23.4 years. The average age of those who took Math 99 and graduated is slightly higher than average. While the correlations between age and courses are not statistically significant, does this imply that younger students tend to need remedial English more than the older student? Since the Mathematics placement is not mandatory, do the figures indicate that students opting to take Mathematics 99 tend to be older?

TABLE VI

GRADUATES WHO TOOK REMEDIAL COURSES

Number Who Had Eng. 98 (%)	Avg. Age	Number Who Had Eng. 99 (%)	Avg. Age	Number Who Had Math 99 (%)	Avg. Age	Percent Who Had All Three (%)	Percent Who Had Eng. 99 and Math 99
29 (10.3%)	22.8	27 (9.6%)	23.4	96 (34.2%)	30.2	6 (2.1%)	8 (2.9%)

CORRELATION BETWEEN AGE AND

English 98	r = -.22
English 99	r = -.19
Math 99	r = +.05

CONCLUSION

While this study provides much information about the graduates of 1985, perhaps what is more important is the questions that it raises. In order to improve and remain responsive to student and community needs, Middlesex Community College needs to know more about itself, specifically, about its students, both those who are successful and those who are not, and the services provided to students. Studies such as this are a small step in that direction.

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